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ABSTRACT

Statewide concern for the quality of public school education in Louisiana led to the passage of a law which created the Louisiana Teaching Internship Program (LTIP) in 1984. The purpose of LTIP is to provide new teachers with a formalized support network and assessment system linked to professional certification. The purpose of this study was to determine differences in two cohorts of student teachers' perceptions and knowledge of LTIP. Results are based on responses of the fall '90 (n=35) and spring '91 (n=62) cohorts of student teachers. Results indicated that the spring cohort had significantly greater knowledge of LTIP and that the two cohorts were similar in their perceptions regarding outcomes of LTIP. Both were concerned about evaluator bias, subject matter competence of evaluators, and that LTIP would discourage people from choosing teaching as a profession. The few significant differences indicated that a larger proportion of the fall cohort obtained information regarding LTIP from the news media. The spring cohort was more positive regarding benefits of LTIP. This research indicated that despite accurate knowledge about LTIP, anxiety was high among both cohorts of student teachers. LTIP's success will largely depend on addressing teachers' anxieties and concerns regarding it. (Author/IAH)

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Louisiana Teacher Internship Program (LTIP): Perceptions of Two Cohorts of Student Teachers

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Abstract

Statewide concern for the quality of public school education in Louisiana led to the passage of the Louisiana Teaching Internship Law (LTIP) in 1984. The purpose of LTIP is to provide new teachers with a formalized support network and an assessment system linked to professional certification.

The purpose of this study was to determine differences in two cohorts of student teachers' perceptions and knowledge of LTIP.

Results are based on responses of the Fall '90 (n=35) and Spring '91 (n=62) cohorts of student teachers.

Results indicated that the Spring cohort had significantly greater knowledge of LTIP and the two cohorts were similar in their perceptions regarding outcomes of LTIP. Both were concerned about evaluator bias, subject matter competence of evaluators, and that LTIP would discourage people from choosing teaching as a profession.

The few significant differences indicated that a larger proportion of the Fall cohort obtained information regarding LTIP from the news media. The Spring cohort was more positive regarding benefits of LTIP.

This research indicated that despite accurate knowledge about LTIP, anxiety was high among both cohorts of student teachers. LTIP's success will largely depend on addressing teachers' anxieties and concerns regarding it.

Louisiana Teacher Internship Program (LTIP): Perceptions of Two Cohorts of Student Teachers

Background and Objectives

At the beginning of the 1988-1989 academic year, the Louisiana Department of Education contracted with the College of Education, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, to develop a "standardized, statewide system for assessing on-the-job performances of all teachers in Louisiana" (Ellett, Loup, & Chauvin, 1990, p. v). This request was made in response to the Louisiana Teaching Internship Law (1984) and the "Children First" Act (1988) to: 1) develop and provide a system of support for all new, beginning teachers; and 2) assess the classroom performance of all Louisiana teachers for purposes of professional, renewable certification. The Louisiana Teaching Internship Program (LTIP) and Louisiana Teacher Evaluation Program (LaTEP) represent the above mentioned mandates. The System for Teaching and Learning Assessment and Review (STAR) Document was developed to meet the requirements of these mandates.

According to Ellett, Loup, and Chauvin (1990), the "STAR extends the focus of comprehensive, on-the-job assessments beyond 'teacher evaluation' to include a primary concern with student learning" (p. v).

The purpose of LTIP is to provide new teachers with a formalized support network and an assessment system that is linked to professional certification.

The main purpose of this study was to understand the LTIP

process from the perspective of two cohorts of preservice teachers. The study was designed to determine if the two cohorts differed with respect to:

1. Accuracy of knowledge regarding LTIP.
2. Sources of knowledge regarding LTIP.
3. Perceptions of:
    a. Outcomes of LTIP.
    b. Benefits of LTIP.
4. Concerns regarding LTIP.

Data Source and Methods

Sample

Questionnaires were administered to all student teachers enrolled at Northwestern State University during Fall 1990 and Spring 1991. The fall cohort comprised of 35 student teachers and the spring cohort of 64.

Instrumentation

The questionnaires used in this study consisted of items about: (a) knowledge of LTIP, (b) sources of knowledge regarding LTIP, and (c) benefits, outcomes, and concerns regarding LTIP.

A 10-item true-false test was used to assess classroom teachers' knowledge of LTIP/LaTEP. These items were based on information contained in the STAR document (Ellett, Loup, Chauvin, & Naik, 1990). These items were reviewed for accuracy and language by four faculty members trained as assessors for LTIP/LaTEP.

Items for the sections on sources of information and perceptions regarding the benefits, outcomes, and concerns of the

evaluation were based on a pilot study in June 1990. Eighty teachers were given an open-ended questionnaire focusing on knowledge of LTIP/LaTEP, sources of knowledge regarding LTIP/LaTEP, and opinions regarding benefits, outcomes, and concerns of LTIP/LaTEP. The major themes of the responses of the teachers provided the basis for the questionnaire. Specialists who were primarily involved with inservice activities related to LTIP/LaTEP reviewed the questions for content and language. Their suggestions were incorporated in the refinement of the instrument.

The section on sources of information regarding LTIP consisted of a checklist of the eight items most frequently cited in the pilot study. The section on benefits, outcomes, and concerns of LTIP consisted of 23 statements based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree".

Analysis

Data from this study for each section were analyzed using statistics as follows:

1. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the respondents' scores on the knowledge items. An item analysis of each knowledge item was also conducted. A t-test for independent samples was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in the average scores of the two groups.
2. Preservice teachers' responses to sources of knowledge regarding LTIP were tabulated and presented in the form of percentages. Chi-square tests were conducted to determine if

there were significant differences in the response patterns of the two groups.

3. Responses to the five-point Likert scale opinion items were collapsed into three categories: (a) percent of respondents agreeing with the statement, (b) percent of respondents undecided about the statement, and (c) percent of respondents disagreeing with the statement. Chi-square tests were conducted to determine if there were significant differences in opinions.

Results

Knowledge of LTIP

Analysis of preservice teachers' responses to the knowledge items indicated that more than three-quarters of the teachers were correctly able to answer questions regarding the performance dimensions to be evaluated, selection process for evaluation, consequences of receiving an unsatisfactory evaluation, and the evaluation instrument to be used. The average score obtained by the fall cohort was 7.02 with a standard deviation of 1.50. The average score obtained by the spring cohort was 7.89 with a standard deviation of 1.21. The t-test indicated that the difference in mean scores was significant at $p < .01$. Table 1 depicts the percentage of respondents who answered each knowledge item correctly.

Insert Table 1 about here

About two-thirds of the respondents from the fall cohort

were able to answer the question regarding lifetime certification however, fewer than one-third of the spring cohort answered that question correctly. The pattern seems to be reversed on the question regarding the number of teachers to be evaluated.

Sources of Knowledge Regarding LTIP

The most frequently cited source of knowledge regarding LTIP was cooperating teachers (67%). Other frequently cited sources of information included university classes, rumours/hearsay and the news media. A significantly greater proportion of the fall cohort indicated that they obtained information from the news media (Chi-square test significant at $p < .05$). Less than one-third of the preservice teachers cited cooperating principals, professional organizations, such as Louisiana Association of Educators (LAE), and inservice workshops as sources of information regarding LTIP. These data are presented in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Benefits/Outcomes of LTIP

Preservice teachers' perceptions of the benefits and outcomes of LTIP are presented in Table 3. About three-quarters of the respondents in both cohorts agreed that LTIP will enable

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Insert Table 3 about here

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ineffective teachers to get help. About two-thirds of the respondents in both cohorts felt that LTIP will enable teachers

to gain informative feedback and motivate them to try new teaching techniques. The respondents seemed to be polarized on the issues of whether LTIP will improve teaching practice or ensure students receiving quality instruction. More than one-third of the respondents disagreed with the statements that LTIP would raise teacher salaries or eliminate ineffective instruction. A similar pattern of responses emerged to the statement that LTIP would increase student learning. A significantly greater proportion of the spring cohort disagreed with the statements that LTIP will motivate teachers to have a greater control over their classroom and ensure teacher competence. About half the respondents felt that LTIP would strengthen the teaching profession.

Concerns Regarding LTIP

Preservice teachers' responses to concerns regarding LTIP are presented in Table 4. Preservice teachers were most concerned about uncontrollable factors disrupting the evaluation

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Insert Table 4 about here

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and that LTIP would create undue stress and anxiety. More than 80% of the respondents in both cohorts were concerned about evaluator bias. About three quarters of the teachers were concerned about subject matter competence of the evaluators. Two-thirds of the preservice teachers were also concerned that LTIP would discourage people from "choosing" a teaching career. About half the respondents were in agreement that LTIP would

force good teachers out of the profession and that the new evaluation system would delay certification for new teachers.

Preservice teachers' ratings also indicated that more than half of the respondents perceive their knowledge base regarding LTIP to be inadequate.

Educational Importance

This line of research will contribute to our understanding of Louisiana's statewide teacher assessment program from the perspective of the preservice teacher. Results of this study indicated that in spite of having fairly accurate information from mostly reliable sources, preservice teachers subjected to express high levels of anxiety about LTIP. Although the spring cohort has significantly greater knowledge about LTIP, there seems to be little difference between the two cohorts with respect to their opinions regarding LTIP. Much of the anxiety may be related to lack of confidence about the benefits and outcomes of the evaluation system, and about the evaluation process. This study suggests that providing information about such a system may not be enough. Teachers have to be "brought on board" for a system such as this to be effective, possibly through inservice, workshops addressing teacher concern and by providing a forum for teachers to express their concerns/questions regarding LTIP.

References

Ellett, C. D., Loup, K. S., & Chauvin, S. W. (1990). System for the tracking and learning assessment and review (STAR). Baton Rouge: Louisiana Department of Education.

Ellett, C. D., Loup, K. S., Chauvin, S. W., & Naik, N. S. (1990). An initial investigation of the criterion-related validity of the system for teaching and learning assessment and review (Tech. Rep. No. 6). Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, College of Education.

Table 1

Preservice Teachers' Knowledge Base of LTIP

Item	% Correct	
	Fall[a]	Spring[b]
Children First Act	70.6	90.3
Evaluation Team	91.2	82.3
Lifetime Certification	64.7	30.6
Intern Selection	70.6	80.6
Purpose of LTIP	70.6	91.9
Unsatisfactory Scores	82.4	93.5
Observation Schedule	41.2	64.6
Use of Instrument	85.3	87.1
Performance Dimensions	85.3	95.2
Number Evaluated	35.3	64.5

Note. Means with different subscripts differ significantly at $p < .01$.

[a]$N = 35$. [b]$N = 64$.

[a]Mean = 7.02. [b]Mean = 7.89.

[a]Std. Dev. = 1.50. [b]Std. Dev. = 1.21.

Table 2

Sources of Knowledge Regarding LTIP

Sources	% Responses	
	Fall[a]	Spring[b]
Cooperating Teachers	67.6	67.7
University Classes	61.8	54.8
Rumors/Hearsay	61.8	67.7
News Media	41.2	62.9
Principal	23.5	22.6
Professional Organizations	17.6	32.3
Cooperating Principals	14.7	14.5
Inservice	11.8	30.6
Other	2.8	11.3

Note. Because of multiple responses, percentages do not add to 100.

[a]N = 35. [b]N = 64.

Table 3

Preservice Teachers' Opinions Regarding Benefits/Outcomes of LTIP

Benefits/Outcomes	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Strengthen Teaching Profession	47.1 **44.3**	20.6 **26.2**	32.4 **29.5**
Make Teachers Better Planners	76.5 **59.7**	8.8 **17.7**	14.7 **22.6**
Make Teachers Work Harder in Classroom	64.7 **46.8**	2.9 **16.1**	32.4 **37.1**
Raise Salaries	26.5 **24.2**	35.3 **29.0**	38.2 **46.8**
Increase Knowledge About Student Needs	38.2 **45.2**	32.4 **19.4**	29.4 **35.5**
More Control Over Classes	61.8 **40.3**	23.5 **21.0**	14.7 **38.7**
Ineffective Teachers Can Get Help	81.8 **74.2**	12.1 **12.9**	6.1 **12.9**
Motivate Teachers to Try New Techniques	63.6 **64.5**	15.2 **17.7**	21.2 **17.7**
Eliminate Ineffective Instruction	51.5 **30.6**	15.2 **22.6**	33.3 **46.8**
Ensure Teacher Competence	33.3 **12.9**	21.2 **25.8**	45.5 **61.3**
Ensure Students Receiving Quality Instruction	39.4 **24.2**	30.3 **32.3**	32.3 **43.5**
Teachers Will Gain Informative Feedback	60.6 **64.5**	21.2 **29.0**	18.2 **6.5**
Increase Student Learning	30.3 **26.2**	24.2 **34.4**	45.5 **39.3**
Improve Teaching Practice	51.5 **43.5**	18.2 **19.4**	30.3 **37.1**

Note. Responses are expressed as percentages.
Fall cohort. N = 35.
Spring cohort. N = 64.

Table 4

Preservice Teachers' Concerns Regarding LTIP

Concerns	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
Uncontrollable Factors Disrupt Evaluation	91.2 **88.7**	8.8 **4.8**	0.0 **6.5**
Adequate Information Regarding LTIP	27.3 **29.0**	14.5 **15.2**	57.6 **56.5**
Concern with Evaluator Bias	84.8 **83.3**	9.1 **11.7**	6.1 **5.0**
Discourage People From Choosing Teaching Career	64.7 **71.0**	9.1 **16.1**	21.2 **12.9**
Force Good Teachers Out of Profession	48.5 **53.2**	21.2 **24.2**	30.3 **22.6**
Delay Certification for for New Teachers	50.6 **45.2**	30.3 **35.5**	9.1 **19.4**
Lowered Teacher Morale	60.6 **58.1**	15.2 **24.2**	24.2 **17.7**
Concerned with Subject Matter Competence of Evaluator	72.7 **75.4**	18.2 **16.4**	9.1 **8.2**
Create Undue Stress and Anxiety	81.8 **90.3**	15.2 **3.2**	3.0 **6.5**

Note. Responses are expressed as percentages.

Fall cohort. N = 35.

Spring cohort. N = 64.